Epinician

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by TheProfoundSilence

Summary

Sequel to Hyperotomachia. Jack is haunted by the dead and the ghosts of his past failures.

EDIT: I made a ridiculously stupid mistake and linked this as the sequel to some other work of mine, when it was the sequel to Hyperotomachia. So sorry for the mess.

Notes

Whelps, I said the first part in this series won't have a sequel. I was wrong apparently. Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Jack found Will after 5 years of relentless searching when others had given up in days, weeks, and months following the scandal.

Will and Hannibal had been under WitSec for approximately 8 months when an anonymous caller had called to report a disturbance in the Lecter house. Jack had pushed the sirens as he raced there. He had hoped to find the Ripper, even when he knew how ridiculously naïve that hope was. Well, he had found the Ripper alright.

The US Marshals had found no sign of either of their witnesses in their new life, their belongings carefully packaged and left as is. When not an active scene, WitSecs were allowed to live their life with no home visit from the Marshals up to a year. Their calls had been normal so far, Hannibal's voice calm and poised, Will's cheerful and content. There had been nothing to prove anything was wrong before that.

The caller, they had later realized, had been Hannibal Lecter himself, calling from a protected number, not even bothering to disguise his voice, his words wrapped with barely-hidden mirth. Of course, he was laughing at them. Fools, the lot of them, and Hannibal Lecter had played them like puppets on a string.

Alana had cried and cried and hugged Will's pups close. Most of them Will had himself given away to various neighbors and friends, and Alana had morosely taken Winston home. It was now the last sign of Will's innocent purity she had left. It would take time, but she would heal and Winston would be a dad and Alana would be a mom, and Alana's son would be one William Morgan Verger who will do his godfather, dead though he is suspected to be, proud. Will's students would mourn and hold a memorial and there would be a lecture theatre in Quantico dedicated to one of the youngest brightest profilers that FBI had ever seen.

They would all look at Jack as if he were the dirt under their shoes.

It makes sense to blame him. Jack does too. All Jack has, are regrets and ghosts. He often sees Bella in his bed, lying by him, breathing so harshly and deeply, as if in deep pain. It’s been years since her death but he still hears her every single day. He isn’t sure what he will do when she stops.

Will is more of a mirage. His doe-like eyes follow him accusingly from rooms, the look of a man destroyed from the inside out. But he isn’t the vengeful bitter man he had grown to be. He is softer, more innocent, and more the boy Jack had seen inside of him and pushed and pushed until it bled and tore.

Bella kept him breathing, and Will kept him going. Even after his retirement. Even after everything.

And then he sees Will in a market in Italy, of all places, one day. He is walking past, in a gorgeous sweater and designer jeans, his eyes sharp and focused as he brushes past Jack and doesn’t even see him. Jack follows him.

He sees Will stop for lunch at a café that is a little too *refined* for Will's tastes, and watches as he pays without flinching or thinking about money. Hannibal's influence had never seemed more obvious in his gaze. Jack confronts him outside.

He draws himself to his full height and waits for Will. He thinks of what he should say or do. Scream at Will for running away. Apologize to him for setting him in Hannibal's path, for not listening to him in any single way that actually mattered. Shake him and tell him that good god, I have been looking for you. Why didn't you stay?

Will comes out and doesn't look at Jack. Jack switches tracks and stands directly in his line of path. Will blinks. His sea-blue eyes are just a tad bluer than he had remembered.

"Can I help you?" Will asked, a little confused, a little wary.

Jack thought of Hannibal's penchant for manipulation, of Will's history of influence. "I thought I knew you from somewhere."

Will tilted his head in thought, like a baby bird in doubt.

Jack thought of Hannibal's history, of his motivations and his arrogance. He shot his bullet and hoped it hit the target. "I know your husband from work."

Will's eyes cleared. He smiled. The tension out of his shoulders leaked away. Jack internally *boiled* . "Oh Henry," he said fondly enough that it made Jack want to puke. "He is really sociable, I guess." He shyly tucked his hair to one side. Will Graham did not shyly do anything at all. "I apologize, Monsieur, I am not as good with names and faces as my husband?"

Jack smiled thinly. "Jack Crawford."

"I have heard a lot about you," Will said in a tone that meant the complete opposite. He looked directly at Jack as he smiled.

"I must say. You really are very well-mannered. No offense, but Americans are a rather rude bunch."

Will smiled, looking flattered instead of offended. "Basic courtesy is a measure of the basis of hospitality which lies in almost every culture that ever was. In a world of such conflicting desires and opinions, the least we can do is be courteous to others about their opinions."

Flowery lines. Except they weren't Will's lines at all. He was a man who credited honesty to courtesy, and blunt truths to garnished lies. He heard Hannibal's poisonous words whispering in Will's ears. "I commend Henry's choice of companion. Though, I must ask. What brings you here to Paris?"

Will frowned, eyes crinkling in thought. "It was a very long time ago. I don't remember. I think I came here to do something. Or maybe I was following my boyfriend here?"

Jack almost laughed at the idea of Hannibal being anything as sweet as someone's boyfriend. "Is that normal? Not remembering?"

Will shrugged. “It *was* a long time ago. It hardly matters anyway.”

Jack nodded. “It is by no means an irrational fancy,” he quoted. “That in future existence, we shall look upon what we think of our present existence, as a dream.”

Will looked delighted. Paused in thought. “Henry would be home soon. Won’t you like to come in and wait for him there? I would hate to cut a lovely discussion short, but Henry worries if I’m not home.”

Jack just bet he worried.

He would have waited any other time. Waited for a game plan, taking time to scoop out the arena in which we would have to fight his war. Except seeing Will like this hurt. It ached. He thought of Will sharing Hannibal’s bed and eating his food and kissing him and fucking him whenever Hannibal made him do it. He thought of Will’s drive for justice, his anti-social personality, and his uniquely charmingly brash energy. All suffocated under the weight of Hannibal’s raw charisma.

He thought of his options. Of waiting for Hannibal in their room as he drank his tea and ate his biscuits. He would jump up as Hannibal came in. Kill him right there and then. Strangle or beat him to death. Face whatever penalties the justice system sentenced him to. At least Will could finally be free.

“Lead the way.”

Will hid his victory behind a mask of affability.

It was almost too easy to lead the misguided shepherd to slaughter.

Will’s hands are softer, his gaze sweeter, his eyes brighter.

For all intents and purposes, Hannibal Lecter seems to have done exactly what Jack had hired him to do all those years ago. Will makes small talk with Jack as they walk home, he doesn’t flinch or grow awkward around Jack’s intense questioning and smoothly sidesteps potential conversation minefields with the grace of a socialite in action.

When they are at ‘his’ home, he offers to take Jack’s coat and graciously seats him on the couch, promising to get him something from the kitchen.

Once upon a time, Jack had wished for nothing more than to be able to bring Will to heel more easily, for him to get along with his team more easily, and for him to be more ‘normal’ even when he kept being brilliant.

Now, the feigned small talk chafes at him.

He had forgotten, or perhaps never realized, just how assuring talking to Will could be. At his best, Will was blunt, honest, and entirely too transparent. He was honest about his limitations,

didn't lie to make himself look better, and never found the point of faking compliments. When everything was spinning sideways, one could always rely on Will to be grounded.

And besides, Will's blunt honesty had its own charms. It's just one more thing he can hate Hannibal for.

Just one more thing he can hate himself for.

Hannibal walked in minutes later. Jack almost jerked in surprise when he saw him.

Hannibal had changed too. His eccentric suit had been swapped for a leather jacket and a pair of jeans. His hair fell casually over his forehead, casually elegant and approachable and charming. Jack just about choked on his rage.

"Henry!" Will greeted Hannibal enthusiastically and jumped up to greet him. Hannibal grabbed Will by his waist, and kissed him, possessive and forceful. There was no way he hadn't seen Jack sitting casually on his sofa, making small talk with his husband. His grip on Will's waist seemed almost suffocating. Will stepped back, smiling. He didn't seem to care about his husband's arm, still wrapped tightly around his waist.

"This is Jack Crawford, Henry. He said you two work together."

"Worked together, darling," Hannibal corrected softly, the endearment sickly sweet around his tongue. "We had some differences of opinion."

Will faltered, turning to look from Hannibal to Jack uncertainly. Even through his sinking heart, he tried to give Will a reassuring smile. The man had been beaten far too much already. He didn't want to alarm this specter of a man anymore.

Hannibal, realizing Jack's cooperation, at least for now, turned to Will. "It's alright, my dear. You couldn't have realized. Besides, there is some unfinished business I have with Jack anyway. Won't you give us some privacy?"

Will looked uncertain, but he nodded. "I'll be upstairs."

Will had barely just left when Hannibal followed after him. Jack tensed when he didn't return for five minutes. He fingered his gun. He debated going upstairs after them.

Hannibal came in quietly after five minutes, sleeves rolled to his elbows. "I put him to sleep. He won't wake up anytime soon."

Jack nodded. He hated agreeing with Hannibal on anything, but Will deserved to not be drawn into conflicts and drama. It was a perfect example of trying to bolt the stable doors after the horse had already run away, moved to another city, and settled on another farm to live out his new life. But, maybe, a little bit of it was to assuage Jack's guilt as well.

Hannibal sat down, next to him. Politely poured himself tea under Jack's incredulous gaze. "Tea? No? Some biscuits perhaps?"

Jack slammed his hand against the table so hard a teacup fell. Tea spilled all over the carpet, but the teacup managed to roll unbroken over the carpet. Hannibal gazed at the teacup for a few seconds. “That was really quite rude, Agent Crawford.”

“As rude as manipulating someone to marry you under false pretenses? For fuck’s sake, that’s not Will up there and you know it!”

“We all keep secrets from our loved ones, Agent,” Hannibal said, painfully reminding Jack of Bella. “And I assure you, change and evolution are the cornerstones of existence. Just because he has evolved over his roots does not make that man any less than Will was.”

Jack looked tired. “I just wanted to protect him.”

“You did,” Hannibal promised him softly, leaning forward. “I will always take care of Will, Jack. I promised to never let him go, and I won’t. You did the best you could, Jack. It’s time to let go now.”

Jack caught the subtle inflection in Hannibal’s tone just fine. He looked squarely at Hannibal’s cruel maroon eyes. The devil peeked back at him. “Not until the day I am dead.”

The average draw speed is 1.5 seconds. Despite not having been in the field for years, Jack’s draw speed is 1 second. It’s still not fast enough.

Jack’s gun is in his hands as he collapses. There is not even a look of surprise on his face as he collapses. The bullet had hit his head dead center. There had been no time to feel anything at all. From behind Jack, Will stepped through the door. His blue eyes were brighter than ever. The gun in his hands was now locked to safety.

“I am sorry you had to do that, mon cher,” Hannibal said mournfully. “I had it handled.”

“Even if Jack didn’t want to acknowledge it, I am a part of this now,” Will said. “Besides, he deserved a quick painless death.” Will paused for a long while. “He looked for me for years, you know.”

“I know,” Hannibal agreed shortly.

Will looked down sympathetically. “He was too self-righteous to heed my advice sometimes and too stubborn to let me go, but god, he was a good friend. He was a good man too.”

“I agree.”

“He is not a pig for us to butcher or display.”

“We will give him the funeral he deserves. It is the least we can do.” He paused. “Was it all worth it?”

Will, to his credit, thought about it. “Before I met you, the answer would have been a resounding no. You broke the man I was then, Hannibal. You broke him and you got me for it.”

“I don’t regret it.”

“No, neither do I.”

Hannibal took Will’s hand, and kissed his knuckles. His hands were softer, his body healthier than it ever was before, to Hannibal’s satisfaction. He had done that.

Jack wasn’t all wrong. It was true perhaps. This man was not the one he had whisked away from Baltimore under the guise of protection years ago. But Jack was also wrong. This Will was no less worthy of being adored than that man had been. “Then,” he said, smiling. “That is all that matters.”

End Notes

Epinician: Celebrating a truimph

Lemme know how you liked it :)

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